The Day of Grace.

1

Day the gospel tiet
Glad tidings spread abroad
y the Saviour cried
hers, return to God;
to Day, good news resounds
mplish'd Grace abounds.

2

lful lesson this
rophets had in view;
[illegible]

The Word of God.

1

O JESUS, what a word is thine,
It gives pure light and heat;
It's fraught with blessings all divine,
Blessings supremely great.

2

Before the Word the devils fly,
My foes confounded fall;
[illegible] hate into love, grim grief gives way,
[illegible] my soul.

B. H. West

LETTERS

FROM AN

ELDER

TO A

YOUNGER BROTHER,

ON THE

CONDUCT TO BE PURSUED,

IN

LIFE.

MIDDLEBURY, VT.
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY W. SLADE, JUN.

1815.

DEDICATION.

TO THE

REV. WILLIAM VINCENT, D. D.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER, &c.

SIR,

IN inscribing these letters to you, I shall not insult you, nor degrade my own reason, by the common vice of dedications; which after an exordium about truth and modesty, generally conclude with the meanest, and most barefaced adulation. I wish only to pay a small tribute of respect; and no one can doubt the propriety of my selecting for a patron, a man who has devoted so large a portion of his life to the education of youth.

The following letters were written to a youth, between thirteen and fifteen years of age; and were particularly directed to those subjects, on which he was, or would be, in most need of advice. They do not pretend to the distinguished title of a compendious system of morality: but, although their sphere of utility must consequently be limited. I believe they may, nevertheless, do some good, whilst I hope they at least possess the negative merit of not being calculated to do harm. I do not publish for fame: were that my object, this questionable merit would not satisfy me.

I have not confined my observations to any particular profession; and it will perhaps surprise some, that they have, throughout, been of so general a nature, and so destitute of minute detail, and more discriminating remarks. But I have always been of opinion, that to descend to such little particularities, and to call the attention of youth with any earnestness to them, is to contract the mind, which wisdom would teach us to

expand. The mind of man is ever ready enough to dwell upon the trifles which come nearest to his limited capacity. We should paralyse the flexibility of youth, by laying much emphasis on subaltern affairs: by more judicious management, their real value (and they all have some value) will ultimately be known. They are the sattellites of a larger orb, and whilst the latter is studied, the other must of necessity be understood. By exposing to the pliant and retentive minds of youth, the minute deformities of vice, we should often instil such hateful ideas of mankind, that the pupil would be misled to a selfish misanthropy: whilst, on the other hand, if we inculcate the expansive attributes of virtue, he must necessarily coimbibe a detestation of vice in every form. He who can steer a first-rate ship, will surely be equal to the helm of a frigate; but the balancing of a little coracle, will never qualify a man for piloting a seventy-four.

Your experience and observation of young minds, must have too well convinced you of

their extreme proneness to misconception, for you to be surprised at my earnestness to guard against it. The flexibility, and, I may say, obstinacy of an unsettled mind, is perpetually carrying them to extremes: if told that the East is not the right course, they will immediately fly to the West, without enquiring whether the North or the South may not be correct.

My letters cannot boast of much novelty of design or remark. Their subjects are few, and the observations on them plain, and such as must be considered obvious and common. This was a circumstance perhaps not to be avoided, had I wished to have avoided it. But my idea is, that virtue is never more successfully supported, nor vice more effectually resisted, than by those plain lessons, which are the necessary deductions from palpable reason, and the facts with which we are acquainted. It is by novelty of observation, perplexing intricacy of doctrine, and the insidious fallacy of sophistry, that the tenets of impiety and wickedness are supported. The

good principles of virtue are best inculcated by a simplicity of doctrine, which is at once comprehended and felt; and are endangered by a meretricious affectation of novelty, which bewilders and confuses an unenlightened mind. The truths of virtue must ever be the same; and the language which is most easily understood, must ever be the best adapted to explain and enforce them. I have introduced no questionable theories, and no problematic uncertainties. My object has been to teach lessons, merely of practical utility, for informing and assisting the understanding; and not glittering dogmas, to dazzle and confound.

A familiar epistolary correspondence cannot but be, in some degree, desultory in style, and often apparently unconnected in argument. A link in the chain of reasoning, which ought to be exposed in a public treatise, will often be omitted, as unnecessary for individual use; and this may sometimes appear to invalidate the deductions. But I have published the letters as they were

written, rather than, by extension and en-
largement, change the nature of the things
and hazard an imputation of the mean ar
of book-making.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

As you are now about to commence a new æra in your worldly pursuits, and to enter upon a new course of study, preparatory to your introduction to a profession in which you are to pass the remainder of your life, I feel too much interested in your welfare, to withhold the best advice which I am capable of giving at a period of so much importance to your future success. This letter, therefore, is the first of a series, which I mean to address to you on some of those subjects, to which I think it is most necessary that you should, at the present time, give your attention.

The effect which my letters may have, will depend almost wholly on your own judgment in the application of them. I shall not, by any express words, allude to you at any time: you must

therefore exercise your own judgment, in discerning when you are the immediate subject of my observations, and where my remarks require your most peculiar attention.—Without such penetration we cannot expect to reap any, but the most distant, advantage from the wisest lessons: without the possession and exercise of this discerning faculty on our part, the wisest sages will have written in vain, and even the holy scriptures themselves will become in a great measure useless.

Without study, and a due attention to the received doctrines of wisdom and the lessons of the experienced, a young man cannot expect to arrive at that degree of human perfection, which is, as it ought to be, the aim of every good man. For, without study, or without that attention, we may listen to the dictates of experience, and ramble through endless pages replete with the most learned instruction, and derive no more knowledge from them, than just sufficient to make us pedants—coxcombs, who have all the dross, but not an atom of the solidity, of science. If, therefore, we would be benefited by what we hear and read, we ought, whilst in the act of hearing or reading, to examine ourselves with the severest

scrutiny, in order to discover whether our character is sullied by any of those vices or errors, which we find held up to abhorrence, or recommended to be avoided. In so doing, we should rather lean towards a willingness to find ourselves guilty, than to the opposite side; for so ready are we all to exculpate ourselves, and so universally are we disposed to put a blind before our eyes, when we examine our own hearts, that the safest way to become acquainted with ourselves is, as it were, to be our own enemies, and in our examination lean, as I have recommended, against a favorable opinion of our merit. If, upon this severe scrutiny of our own consciences, we find the lessons of others applicable to ourselves, and that we are guilty of any of those vices which are reprobated, our duty is obvious. We ought to labor to eradicate the evil, and not cease from the task until we feel really conscious of our complete success. On the other hand, if, after this close self-examination, we can allow that we are free from the vice which is condemned, or that we even practise some virtue which is applauded, every condemnation of that vice, and every praise of that virtue, is a direct approval of our conduct, and should stimulate us to perse-

vere in it. But we should not be tempted to desist from this application to ourselves of what we hear and read, because we should happen to find ourselves, thus in the practice of one solitary virtue, or even of many virtues. For so numerous are the vices of mankind, that however virtuous a man may be in the eyes of the world, or in his own estimation, there will still remain an almost countless number to be overcome; and he will, indeed, be acting a most unwise part, should he think himself secure and perfect. His very presumption, in thus estimating his own merit, is one of the greatest crimes against his Creator.

Do not imagine that this self-examination is in any degree arduous or fatiguing. It is a thing which, I hope, has always been familiar to you, and always accompanied you in your studies. Indeed, I believe it to be a natural faculty of the human mind, although, from want of reflection, most men are insensible to its action. And it is my opinion, that men generally fail, only in that amendment of life which ought to be the consequence of the discoveries which this faculty makes to them, and not in the exercise of the faculty itself; for they have no power to suppress that, it being in fact no less than conscience; to

the workings of which all men are subject, although few reflect upon the various methods of its operation.

In order, however, not to be led into error in his judgment of virtues and vices, a young man should be cautious, in his studies, not to read books of an injurious tendency. It is a very common notion for young minds to imbibe, and those also who ought to know better, are often influenced by it, that whatever appears in print is incontestably true and correct. But this is a most mistaken conception; for, unhappily for the interests of virtue; vice is circu ated by the art of printing in a most extensive degree; if not, as I fear, in a degree more extensive than the benefit which virtue has received from the same art. So subtle, too, is the poison which wicked or mistaken men have instilled into their writings, particularly of late years, and so artfully have they distributed it, that the inexperienced man is led away into vice and error without perceiving the stratagems which have ensnared him, and without being sensible that he has once strayed from the path of honesty. By being thus a silent, he is a more secure, victim of vice, and at last becomes her devoted instrument, and the accomp-

lice of her wicked designs. It is, therefore, highly necessary, that a young man, in his reading, should be guided by the judgment of his experienced seniors, and take up those books alone, which they, or the general opinion and approbation of the better part of mankind, sanction as proper subjects for his study. When he grows to manhood, and his principles are fixed, it may, perhaps, be necessary, that he should then peruse the worst writings of the worst men, in order that he may become acquainted with all the subtle artifices and malicious contrivances of vice, and be the better able to oppose them.

LETTER II.

There is a confidence, a total want of modesty, an impudence in some men, which cannot be too severely blamed. But there is a failing of a very different nature, which opposes the advancement of others. Whether it arises from a natural meekness of disposition, or from living too little abroad in the world, or from what other cause, I cannot determine, but some young men contract a bashfulness, *pravam pudicitiam*, a kind of bastard modesty, which invariably makes upon the world an impression extremely unfavorable to their promotion in life. I hardly know how precisely to describe what I mean; but I believe you will understand me, when I say it is a habit of doing every thing silently; of doing secretly what it would be no discredit for the world to know, and acting, even in the most common and trivial occurrences, in such a manner as would make any one, who should perchance observe them, suspect that they were occupied on something which they were ashamed to make known. Such a practice

as this will stamp on a man a sneaking and underhand character, and will naturally induce every one to distrust him, even though his real disposition and conduct should be the most honorable and upright. This is universally the effect of such a habit: and to say that so long as our conduct is intrinsically honorable and upright, it matters not what outward appearance it bears in such little circumstances, is a most absurd and futile argument, from a member of human society. Were we placed in this world *merely* to look forward to the next, and to scorn all the affairs and transactions of this sphere, such an argument might indeed be very available. But although, it is true, our Creator has commanded us to direct our aim to meriting a happier life hereafter, yet should we be unwise indeed to fancy, that, when he fixed us here, he intended us to neglect all the concerns of the life which he gave us, and to have no regard to our well-being on earth. Indeed, to interest ourselves in the good government of human affairs, and our own individual welfare and maintenance, is one of the *duties* of life. As, therefore, such a conduct as I have now pointed out to your observation, must, by making others suspicious of us, impede our advancement,

and ultimately produce much uneasiness to us, we should guard against it, and act a more manly part.

There are some things which derive half their merit from being done secretly. A benevolent or charitable action loses more than half its lustre, if you do it openly and ostentatiously. Do it in secret, and the object thinks himself doubly your debtor. But this is not what I mean: nor do I wish to recommend a confident and impudent assurance. What I complain of, is a want of manliness, a sneaking manner accompanying the actions of some persons, as well in the most trifling as in the more material occurrences, but in both equally injurious to their interest: and I fear that a long continuance of this habit may at last induce them to be less scrupulous, in regard to the intrinsic integrity of their conduct; so that in the end they may, from habituating themselves to clothe honorable actions in so suspicious a garb, be led into acts of which they ought to be ashamed.

The conduct which I would advise in opposition to this, is a manly openness of behaviour, than which nothing recommends a man more strongly, nothing more efficaciously promotes his

interest in life. Not a boisterous assuming effrontery, which some mistaken coxombs imagine to be the characteristic of manliness: modesty is one of the most prominent features of what I esteem manliness: a blush is no disgrace to the cheek of any one. This open behaviour procures a man respect. Without it, he is a mere cipher in society; when absent, he is not thought of, and even his friends forget him. But with it, his company is courted, and his absence regretted. He is not deterred, by difficulties, from pushing his own interest in the world. The world sees it, and assists him. Whilst he, who acts with that sneaking bashfulness which I have reprehended, is too timid and undetermined to exert himself; and, however intrinsically meritorious he may be, the world sees him not, and neglects him. You will do well, always to recollect the fable of the carter, who called to Hercules to pull his wheel out of the rut; and be assured, the world, like Hercules, never helps those who do not help themselves.

LETTER III.

Nothing more assists a young man in making a favorable impression on others, than an honest openness of behavior, and a contempt of all concealment. The world will invariably be prejudiced against him who pursues an opposite conduct; whilst he who acts, on all occasions, with candor and openness, will be sure to find friends; and the world will not easily believe, that he, whose manner displays so much honesty, can have any evil at heart. But mistake me not: I do not mean that *honesty of heart* is the less indispensable to the character of a man, because he may bear this appearance of integrity in his manner. That would be to maintain the detestable doctrines of Lord Chesterfield, whose letters to his son display the rankest perversion of a brilliant genius. Their object is to polish the person, at the expense of all the good and virtuous principles which ought to adorn the character of man.—Lord Chesterfield strove (I hope in vain) to teach the world that there is no vice which is not venial,

provided we have hypocrisy sufficient to conceal it, or art enough to render it palatable. These letters I caution you to avoid, as the worst enemies to your happiness and integrity.

The openness of conduct to which I have called your attention, I recommend only as a means of giving others a favorable opinion of you, and in that way promoting your advancement and felicity in life; not as in any degree rendering unnecessary the most rigid honesty of conscience. An unceasing practice of this conduct will be found a very useful assistant, indeed almost a safeguard, against the temptations of vice. For if we make it our custom not to prevaricate, and gloss over our faults by an attempt to conceal them, we shall find the confession of them, at the same time when it gives us the satisfaction of having preserved our veracity, produce an uneasiness, which we shall in future be happy to escape, by avoiding the acts which would cause a repetition of it.

We shall, indeed, in vain hope to gain from mankind, that respect which ever attends merit, if we do not at all times maintain the most unremitting veracity. Consider the fears, and the consciousness of dishonesty, which agitate the school-boy, when he asserts the smallest falshood;

and conceive in how much more acute a degree we must, in manhood, until our sensations be deadened by a continued course of deceit, feel those fears and that consciousness! Indeed, I am persuaded that a man, until hardened by a systematic practice of deception, suffers more inward pain from the guilt of a falsehood, even though he may have been successful, and have lulled suspicion by it, than he could possibly have experienced from the shame attendant on a public detection of his being guilty of another crime. Veracity is the key stone of integrity. Let a man try it but as an experiment only, and he will even then find it attended by effects so honorable and gratifying to his soul, that he cannot but feel himself irresistibly led to actions, which it can be no shame to him for the world to know: and as his veracity promotes his virtue, so will his virtue preserve his veracity: each supports and adorns the other. But I must most strongly express my abhorrence of all prevaricating equivocations; of truth in words, bnt deceit in signification; the artifices and subterfuges of the weakest and most wicked of men. Truth is naked; her meaning is at all times evident, clear and intelligible to the lowest capacity. These paltry devices never

succeed. The merest idiot has penetration sufficient to detect this falsehood in disguise. Whatever may be the apparent tenor of the *words*, if deception be the object, if falsehood be in mask behind them, they are lies, and lies of the most infamous character.

This truth and openness of behavior will, above all things, tend to preserve us from that host of *secret faults*, which, as they are silent and unresisted, are the most dangerous enemies to our virtue and prosperity in life. It will teach us to relinquish practices which we persevere in, only because we know that we are able to conceal them. Too many of these secret vices are contracted in our earliest years, and not a few of them do we carry with us to our graves. They are thus, through life a drawback to our virtue and an antidote to our happiness. They poison all the seeds of the former, corrupt the sources of the latter, and often injure our health, and hurry us to an early death. Against these vices, and against *every action* which would tempt you to concealment, I caution you in the strongest terms. Concealment is but another name for hypocrisy; and every thing which promotes that, is a bane to virtue, a foe to our happiness, and a

disgrace to our character. All these bad qualities are united in those secret vices, which are committed in the security of privacy, and which shun the eye of every observer. These vices, therefore, of whatever nature they may be, however and whenever practised, should be shunned as the deadliest enemies to our interest, as well in the life to come as the present.

LETTER IV.

Some mistaken men are apt to imagine, that it is essentially necessary to the character of men of courage and honor to be boisterous in their actions, and to blaspheme and swear with adroitness; and are thus weak and wicked enough to contract a custom of using, on all occasions, a grossness of language which would disgrace the common yard of a gaol. To you who have been educated in habits of piety, which, I doubt not, make you abhor such blasphemy and indecency, it is needless to point out the wickedness, danger and indelicacy of this conduct. You well know how strongly it is forbidden by the holy Scriptures; and you have had the ten commandments too firmly impressed upon your mind, to give way to the infamous, and too, too common custom of taking in vain the name of your Creator. Can there be conceived any more palpable breach of the commandment by which this is forbidden, than calling upon God to witness the most insignificant action, or the most improper paroxysm of

passion. But, to the shame and sorrow of mankind be it told, this is not the greatest indignity, which too many of them cast upon their Maker: for they often scruple not to adjure him to support falsehood and wickedness.

Beside this direct profaneness, there are modifications of the crime, which are less observed, and which have long been silently creeping into general usage. By these, inconsiderate men hope that they avoid the crime, whilst they at the same time indulge themselves with expressions of vehemence and passion. These men substitute for the usual exclamations of those who are less scrupulous, the adjuration of—"by Heaven!" and many other phrases, which have been formed for the purpose of evading the penalties attending what they think more serious terms. We are, I believe, indebted to play-writers for the invention of this ingenious mode of keeping out of the scope of the commandment. The stage, which ought to be the mirror of virtue, has first introduced this practice, to avoid offending the ears of the auditors; and having established this, has become bolder, and now ventures very commonly upon open blasphemy. But those who use this evasive profaneness, will, perhaps, relinquish it, should

any one remind them, that the holy scriptures declare, that "he who sweareth by heaven, sweareth by the great inhabitant thereof; and he who sweareth by the throne of God, sweareth by him who sitteth thereon." He, therefore, who invokes Heaven for an unworthy purpose, is guilty of a breach of the third commandment. But although this is so plainly declared, yet have men, with an audacious indelicacy, adopted this forbidden oath, from a hope of escaping the letter, whilst they violate the spirit, of the commandment, with the same cunning which prompts them to evade an excise or smuggling act.

Others, in impatience or passion, break out into the common exclamation of—"Zounds!" "Confound it!" and many of a similar sort; and these persons are on the lowest step of blasphemy. But when they are thus far advanced in their progress, they seldom stop, till they have arrived at the highest; for when they have long used these expressions, they think them tame and spiritless, and panting for some of more violence, at last adopt the most infamous terms of profaneness.

Many ill-judging men appear to think it necessary to employ an imprecation, and to call God to witness their words, if they wish their assertions to be believed. When these men desire to obtain credit, they invariably accompany their communications with an oath, or with a multitude of oaths. But, were they well advised, they would know, that if their character for veracity is so low, that they are not believed without the assistance of blasphemy, they will never be really credited although they should overwhelm their auditors with oaths. If, on the other hand, a man have a better character than this, he will do well not to injure it by profaneness. Indeed, should he endeavor to strengthen his assertions by oaths, and succeed in silencing doubt, the credit he will obtain, will, owing to the harsh and suspicious means by which he procured it, be unstable and easily subdued; for power obtained by force is always easily overcome; whilst he, who, prizing truth too much to disgrace it by such support, makes it his rule never to aim at credit by such methods, will be believed on his bare word, at times when no oaths and no vehemence of diction can convince those who are disposed to be incredulous. But even

he, who really deserves credit, will invariably be suspected by all men in their hearts, if he attempts to convince them by swearing.

One of the many common and most injurious consequences of a passionate irritability of temper, is blasphemy. If we suffer ourselves to be vexed, and our temper to be disturbed, by any of the numerous little inconveniences or contradictions of life, we pant for expressions in which to vent our vexation, and are at first satisfied with those which I have denominated the first step to blasphemy; and which, indeed, are but substitutes adopted for it, by men who long to employ the principal, but dread to begin. From this step we proceed, as our passion returns, to use more vehement terms, till at last we find our temper too irritable to be vented in any but the most profane imprecations. You see in this the progress of passion. It acts thus in all its consequences, which are numerous, and all equally criminal, and equally detrimental to ourselves. The command of our temper, it is true, is a difficult thing to obtain; but it is a thing so obviously necessary, salutary, and laudable, that no sensible man will neglect to attempt the accomplishment of it: and the consciousness of its being a difficult

task, will stimulate a virtuous man more strenuously to endeavor to perform it. But I am inclined to think, that it is not altogether a thing of so great difficulty, as it is sometimes considered. If we begin by checking the first rising of passion, when it shows itself in the most trivial occurrences, and when we are, as it is termed, "provoked," we shall at least find *that* no arduous undertaking. When we have accomplished this, we should go one step farther, and endeavor to curb the more violent and serious eruptions of passion. By thus proceeding upwards, we shall find self-command as gradual and certain a consequence of our honorable exertions, as is a habit of blasphemy the gradual and certain result of yielding to the first little symptoms of a passionate temper.

Be prudent then, my dear ———, and strive to keep your temper under due command. All men are more or less liable to passion; but it is he, who has the dominion of his temper, who best preserves himself from the temptations of sin. He too it is, who thrives in the world: he is cool amidst troubles, difficulties and disasters, amidst turbulence and discord, and in all the contradictions of life. He, therefore, will be able to see and pursue his object, and obtain it, whatever it

may be, amidst the greatest obstacles and confusion. Whilst those who do not possess a similar self-command, will be lost in the difficulties created by their own uncontrolled vehemence of temper.

LETTER V.

That faculty of the mind which is called courage, is often considered as a natural gift to some men, whilst nature has the credit of being so unkind to others, as to withhold so distinguished a virtue from them. But there can be no doubt, that the education of our earlier years has a very great effect in teaching it to us. Indeed I am inclined to think, that we owe our character for courage almost wholly to that cause, if we except the effect which our state of health must always produce. If you see a man timorous, wavering, and easily thwarted in his pursuits, you will generally be correct, in concluding, that, when he was a boy, he was kept at home, fondled, and treated like a hot-house plant. But, on the other hand, if you behold a man thrusting himself into prosperity with a fortitude undaunted by difficulties, or resenting with a manly and becoming composure, the indignities of unworthy men, or treating with contempt the slander of his enemies; you will always judge rightly, to say, that

he was in his childhood taught to bear contradiction and practise self-denial, and that he was early sent from home, and compelled to force his own progress in the world.

There is one infallible mode of acquiring courage, which is easily adopted by those who have not been fortunate enough to have had it instilled into them by other means. He who behaves with openness, honor and integrity, towards all men, who treats all with a becoming affability and good humor, can give no just offence to any one: and if, notwithstanding this his upright and conciliating conduct, any evil disposed person should affront him by impertinence, or injure him by malice or defamation, the honest confidence with which his own integrity and civility of demeanor will inspire him, will give him courage to chastise their insults, and subdue their slander.

But you must not mistake the nature of this manly virtue. True courage is not vehement or without bounds, but sober steady, and resolute. "*Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re.*" It is the characteristic of cowardice, and not of courage, to be ostentations of showing our superiority over our adversaries; and to persist in chastising or

exposing them, when they repent or submit; and to be overbearing towards those, who are inferior to us, either in strength, courage or station, or to show a petulant anxiety to resent insults from them, is an infallible symptom of the most pitiful and contemptible cowardice. Indeed, courage is at all times best evinced by calm and dignified forbearance; and by that characteristic may genuine and honorable fortitude be universally known. When this forbearance is rendered no longer practicable by the pertinacity of our adversaries, and ceases to have any good effect, it is by steady resistance, and a firm exercise of our powers, that we shall silence their defamation, or put a stop to their insults; and not by peevish and outrageous passion.

The usual method of resenting affronts in modern times, is duelling: and there are many who think, that if we duly regard the inherent desire of every human being to be in good repute in the world, and the overbearing tyranny of society and custom, there may, perhaps, be circumstances of peculiar ill-treatment, in which an appeal to the laws would afford no efficacious succour, and when this last and desperate resort may perhaps, be palliated. But, supposing that

it may be palliated, every wise, every virtuous and humane man will leave no means untried to avoid this horrid expedient. Consider to what is the appeal made,—to the steadiest hand and the most skilful eye; and these qualifications will seldom be on the side of the injured man. For he who can deliberately do an injury to another, will feel very little repugnance to meeting him in a duel, and committing a more horrid crime. The hand of this aggressor will be steady, and his eye faithful, whilst his opponent will tremble at the idea, that the severity of custom has compelled him to aim at the life of a fellow-creature.

It is a lamentable fact, that there are many infamous wretches, who daily make a trial of their skill, at an inanimate mark, with the hope of one day signalizing their talents at a more substantial object. These monsters, having acquired the necessary expertness, insult and abuse unsuspicious men, with the view of quarrelling and fighting; yet never forgetting to select *proper* objects, —those whom they may hope to meet without danger to themselves. But, still *supposing* that duelling may be palliated under peculiar circumstances, to have recourse to this murderous species of judgment, for the sake of a dog, a

riband, a feather, or for any other of those trifling quarrels which have lately caused so many deaths, is a crime of the deepest dye, an impeachment of our understanding, and a disgrace to our laws and our nature. Yet, whether this custom may or may not be sometimes excused, all good men must unite in the desire of seeing this tyranny of society overcome, and this ordeal abolished; and every one who wishes the cause of religion and morality, and the real interests of society to prosper, will refuse to give his sanction to such a custom, by appealing at any time to its decision. After all, what do the arguments of its advocates amount to, but a proof that they more esteem the favorable opinion, and the blind prejudices of mankind, than the express laws and gracious approbation of their God; that they "love the praise of men more than the praise of God," who has said, "thou shalt do no murder."

We should practise the same forbearing firmness in our opinions, as in our actions. But we must beware that we do not fall into the very general error of mistaking obstinacy for firmness. Nothing less indicates a penetrating and judiciously persevering mind, than a pertinacious resistance to the opinions and arguments of others,

when we feel sensible that they are just. On the other hand, if we hold ourselves willing to be convinced, and readily confess it when we are so, every one will acknowledge our candor and judgment; and most commonly we shall even impress him who has convinced us, with a sense of our superiority. We should first study strenuously and incessantly to form correct opinions, and to obtain a full acquaintance with our subject; and when we have arrived at this, we may persevere with firmness in our conclusions so long as we continue really convinced of their correctness. But we should never suffer any confidence in the accuracy of our own notions to induce us to be less attentive to the arguments of others: for, although we may fancy that our own aim at truth has been successful, yet may we find, by listening to the opinions and reasoning of others, that their ideas are more correct than ours. By turning a deaf ear to their words, we may very probably, whilst we plainly evince our bigotry, prevent our knowing the only argument which was wanting to our just conception of the subject. Besides, every one will think that cause a bad one, whose advocates refuse to hear their opponents. We should remember also that success is

not a necessary and certain consequence of even our most strenuous attempts at just opinions; and the recollection of this should render us courteous and attentive to those who have formed conclusions different from our own. It is not by celerity and hastiness in our ideas, that we shall arrive at a right judgment;—to attain that, we must be slow to conviction, and, whilst we maintain a diffident tardiness in our conclusions, examine every thing minutely. When we have duly weighed all things, and formed our decision, we may be firm, but not bigoted, obstinate, or conceited.

LETTER VI.

An independent spirit is generally the most successful. For he who relies on his own exertions, and puts but little confidence in hopes of assistance from others, will have the means of his success in a great measure in his own power. He will, at least, be certain to escape that disappointment, and that derangement of his schemes, which are the consequence of finding the expectation of foreign aid fail. But he whose hopes depend upon the promises or the actions of others, will see his prospects delayed or disappointed by continual clouds, and will waste his life in a state of wavering uncertainty. He will awake from his delusive dependence, only to find his hopes annihilated, and his time irrecoverably misspent. He will be surprised to discover, that, so far from having made any progress in the world, his ill-judged confidence has reduced him, in his latter days, to a state of more insignificance than childhood. An independent spirit attracts the admiration of the world; and whatever the world,

admires, it invariably supports. The world too, although it thus admires independence in others, does itself delight in a state of dependence; and there is no one to whom it will so readily and implicitly devote itself, as to him who confides in the resources of his own mind. Fortune is fabled to be followed and courted by other men, and to elude their pursuit; but on this man she is a servile attendant; she fawns on him, and solicits and supplicates him to accept her favors.

This useful virtue, however, like all other good qualities, is misconceived by weak men. Of these, some imagine that independence consists in a haughty, sarcastic, forbidding demeanor, and a contemptuous neglect of all opinions and all interests but their own. They thus degenerate into a most detestable selfishness, little removed from misanthropy. But nothing can be more preposterously absurd, than calling such characters independent. Men are social beings.—Society is a chain formed by the hand of nature, and he who breaks a link sins against his Creator. True independence of mind consists in the refusal to *court* the promises of others, and fawn with a slavish sycophancy on hopes of their aid; but it goes no farther. It is true, that it teaches us not

to dangle upon each other; but it forbids not our being affable and courteous in our behaviour. It enjoins us to despise the empty word of a promise-giving patron; but from this spirit we shall never learn to abhor any but dishonest men. It makes our own interest our principal aim, when it can honorably be so; but it is far from forbidding us to assist the progress of our fellow creatures. It may give us a confidence in our own opinions; but, so far from making us deaf to those of other men, it will render us the more attentive to them.

Other equally misguided men fancy they evince their independence, by superciliously rejecting every proffered assistance, and by refusing to listen to any suggestions but those of their own minds. They practise their self-denial, by haughtily delining every advantageous offer, and show their confidence in their own resources, by turning away from every admonitory word which friendship tenders to them. By declining the former, they very probably lose the only opportunity which fortune will give them, of reaching the object of their aim; and by turning away from the latter, they may refuse to hear the only advice which was wanting to lead them to suc-

cess. The truth is, that in this, as in all other sublunary things, the safe course is the middle between the two extremes. The proper guides of independence, are honor and prudence: honor, to preserve us from meanness and injustice; and prudence, to direct us in the choice of our pursuits and the means of attaining them. We should keep ourselves as free as possible from all reliance beyond our own exertions: but we are by no means to reject the favors of others, when the acceptance of them will not interfere with our integrity; and at no time are we justified in behaving with contemptuousness or unkindness to others. We must, however, narrowly watch ourselves, that we do not suffer a false sense of interest to bias our actions, and seduce us to accept favors at the price of our honesty. We may be sure, that when any favor binds us to another by any other tie than that of honorable gratitude, our integrity is infringed by the acceptance of it.

You are not to imagine that kind words, or general promises, deserve a moment's regard. They are usually given, because it is conceived that politeness requires them; and, at best, are meant only to express good wishes. They are not accompanied by any intention of conferring

any substantial favor. Yet there are many unobserving men, who have not sufficient knowledge of the world, to be sensible of the real value of these trifles. They build their hopes upon such a sandy base; and when the day of occupancy comes, are miserably disappointed to discover the instability of their foundation They then accuse him, whom their own folly had mistaken for a patron, of faithlessness and cruelty; when, in fact, the only blame rests with their own ignorant imagination. The fancied patron is in no fault: he used but the current language of the day; if without meaning to befriend, certainly also without any intention to injure or mislead. The want of knowledge and observation in the others, is the only culprit, and the only author of their disappointment.

LETTER VII.

One of the most certain measures for imparting a real independence to our minds, is to keep ourselves free from all those galling obligations, which a want of economy and good management in our pecuniary concerns invariably imposes on us. Every man has it in his power to confine his expenditure to his means; and so long as he does that, he may preserve his independence. But when once we go beyond the boundary which prudence prescribes, we take a most dangerous step, a step which we cannot recall, and from the effects of which we rarely recover. We easily obtain credit; and having once indulged in the luxuries which that supplies us with, and which were before unknown to us, we find ourselves so little disposed to return to our former contracted enjoyments, that we make no efforts to go back, but gradually run on until we have dissipated our whole possessions. We then find ourselves embarrassed in difficulties, from which we are sensible that it is utterly impossible to extricate our-

selves. This state of embarrassment keeps us in continual alarm. It tempts, nay, almost compels, us to resort to the meanest arts and subterfuges, and to scrape together, by the most disgraceful expedients, a scanty and uncertain subsistence.

But he who spends with regularity and economy, who considers his resources, and takes good care not to exceed them, preserves most securely his independence and honor. He holds in his own hands the means of his happiness, and does not squander a fund, to which he can resort on all emergencies, to assist the needy, or to maintain his own rights. Here let me particularly recommend to you an undeviating habit of punctual payment. Pay as you go, and refuse to receive credit; and then if any circumstances should prevent your becoming a rich man, you will still have the greatest comfort which riches can bestow—a consciousness of not being in debt. Prudence not only enjoins us not to exceed our income, but also teaches us the salutary effects of keeping our expenditure below our means: for we may sustain an unexpected loss, or the public demands on us may increase, or a fortunate opportunity may offer of advantageously laying out a sum of money. Some of these unforeseen oc-

currences, and many more of a similar nature, may call for a part of our income; and if our ordinary expenses absorb the whole of that, we shall be unable to supply such extraordinary emergencies, without breaking in upon our future support, and encountering the dangers of such an infringement; or we must resort to the mortifying expedient of reducing our establishment, and subject ourselves to the insinuations and chattering remarks of scandal. In short, consider the subject in whatever point of view you please, you will still see, that punctuality in our pecuniary affairs, is the surest road to independence and success in life, and one of the best preservatives from meanness and dishonesty; and that extravagance, and a want of punctuality, are pregnant with the worst consequences, and lead to wretchedness and dishonor, and every wicked and disgraceful action.

In this economical conduct, and in all other prudential pursuits, we shall have to encounter the ridicule of those, who are too short-sighted to see the advantages, or too weak to esteem them worth acquiring, or to think it laudable to pursue hem. But we must hold ourselves superior to the taunts of those infatuated men, who

are too blind to be prudent. We must despise the ridicule which we cannot silence. But ridicule is a powerful opponent, and wisdom will teach us to allay it, if it be possible. Ridicule, as an ingenious modern writer* justly observes, will often give the advantage to a fool, who has no other superiority over his modest antagonist, than impudence. It has frequently happened, that some ludicrous circumstance at a man's outset in life, has alone prevented his rising to the first honors. So powerful and dangerous is this active enemy, that we should cautiously strive to escape him by every quiet art we can employ. If our utmost endeavors in this way are ineffectual, we must then pursue a different course, and beat back by the firmest contempt, a foe whom we cannot evade. We should first endeavor, like Orpheus, to lull this watchful Cerberus, by the softest arts; but if they are unsuccessful, we must resort to the more violent measures of Hercules, and conquer him by open contempt. For it is with ridicule, as with reproach; when we find all attempts to silence it ineffectual, we may securely despise it, so long as we at all times act uprightly and cour-

* *Ely Bates. See his Rural Philosophy.*

teously ; but it is a duty we owe to ourselves to try first to arrest its activity ; at the same time taking care that we do not permit it to bias the integrity of our actions.

Small as, stoically considered, may be the value of wealth, and the merit of frugality in the use of it ; yet if we reflect that it can command very many of the comforts of life, and not a few of the real blessings of mortality, no wise man will deny that it is our duty and interest to employ with the most careful discretion, a possession endowed with so great power. Consider too the restless, anxious and needy life, which is invariably the ultimate consequence of extravagance. The unwise man who lavishes his possessions with culpable profusion, most commonly ends his days a deserted, and often a famished outcast, unpitied, and without a friend. He will in his prosperous days, find all willing to partake in the pleasures of his dissipation. But though all may then appear to smile upon him, none will ever esteem or befriend him. The extravagant man can never enjoy the confidence of any one ; for who will be found so wanting in common prudence, as to confide any thing to him, who squanders so unprofitably his own means of subsistence ?

Parsimony is not what I wish to inculcate. I only want to teach you reason in your expenditure. Always maintain as good, nay even as splendid, an appearance, as your resources will easily afford; but be resolute in the determination of keeping your expenses within your means. He is not the wise and happy man, who possesses much, or maintains for a season an ostentatious grandeur; but he who has learnt "*Deorum muneribus sapienter uti.*" Whether his possessions be great or small, the establishment which he affects is such as they can support for a permanence; and he leads a contented life, unalloyed by the anxieties, which ever corrode the short-lived and questionable pleasures of the profuse.

LETTER VIII.

A SUBMISSIVE respect for his superiors, is by no means incompatible with the character of a man of spirit; for we can be respectful without cringing. Indeed the various gradations of rank are so very necessary for the support and good order of society, that every man is interested in the preservation of them; and the observance of the forms which custom has attached to them, is a duty which every one, who partakes the benefit of society, ought scrupulously to perform.

Obedience, you well know, is the vital principle of an army and no man has a right to complain of the denials to which it constrains him.* When he enters the military profession, he is sensible of the necessity of implicit obedience, and is well aware thet he shall be subject to it. He, therefore, should at all times obey not only without murmuring, but with cheerfulness and alacrity.

* *The person to whom this was addressed, was then destined for the army.*

But we are not to imagine that obedience to our superiors is our only duty, and that it cancels all obligation to behave well to our inferiors: for there is a respect due to those of the meanest rank. Their lot may have placed them below us in the scale of society; but they are still our fellow creatures, and our equals by nature; and we abuse the adventitious superiority which we enjoy, if we treat them with superciliousness. If they conduct themselves with honesty and sobriety, their merit is as great as ours, although their sphere of action may be more limited and less conspicuous; and their reward in the next world will not be less than our own. An upright man in the humblest station, will ever be a more truly honorable and exalted character, than the proud and dishonest one, though he be surrounded with all the pomp and admiration which attend the highest rank. I repeat, there is a *respect* due to those of the lowest rank. If ours be the military profession, the meanest sentinel has a *right* to our *esteem*, so long as he conducts himself properly; and we disgrace ourselves and our rank, if we wantonly exercise our power over him, and inju ' his feelings or his reputation. For every man as some tender point, and something to lose; and however small in our estimation

may be the pain he can feel, or the value of what we can take from him, still his all is much to him, and he must suffer, if he be deprived of it. But in all professions, and in every station of life, those below us are deserving members of society, and *at least* have a right to our *courtesy* and *respect*, so long as they are honest and industrious: and longer than that, no man, not even one of the most exalted rank, has any claim to our esteem. Indeed a man's good sense and good nature are always best displayed, by an undeviating affability to his equals, a kindness and respect for his inferiors, and a willing observance of that attentive submission to his superiors which custom has sanctioned. But our deportment to those below us, must not be what the world calls *condescention*, for the use of that word, and acting upon the idea which it conveys, bespeak pride, and pride is always contemptible.

The military profession, in times of inactivity and idleness, is very dangerous to the characters of young men. They are tempted, by the want of employment, and examples always before them, to run into all the avenues of vice, and contract bad habits, which they are never after-

wards able to elude. They yield themselves up to every desire which they ought to control, and indulge in all the vicious caprices which haunt the listness mind. But let me caution you to restrain every bad desire, and not to be tempted from the paths of virtue and good conduct. As the surest safeguard against the temptations of your passions and the force of ill example, never allow your mind to languish in inactivity: for the mind suffers by idleness fully as much as the body. The whole frame of the latter is contracted and deformed by it, the muscles are enervated, and the limbs become useless. So it is with the mind; which soon loses its vigor, and is easily corrupted in a state of indolence. In every intermission of military duty, therefore, fail not to preserve the strength and purity of your mind, by the employment which books, and the indulgence of every laudable curiosity, will always supply.

But, above all things, beware of the fiend of gambling. By this resource some men are enabled to live in a detestable splendor, upon the ruin of the inconsiderate and less skillful, and the impoverishment of innocent families. But alas! how many more are there, who, having staked and lost the means of a comfortable, and

often an affluent subsistence, are driven by madness to the haunts of sinful wretchedness; and, at last, in a fit of phrenzy, vainly try to forget their guilty imprudence, by an act of suicide! Consider these consequences, and let the contemplation deter you from provoking them.

You are not, however, to suppose that I mean to libel all military men, by suggesting these bad habits of the profession: for there are in it many truly honorable men, who have ever preserved themselves from the contagion. I am happy to say that I can number some of them amongst my own friends. My only object is to make you acquainted with some of the first and most dangerous seductions of vice, which you will have to encounter, and which too many young men want strength of mind sufficient to resist.

LETTER IX.

I SHOULD before have cautioned you against an unguarded confidence in any one, and rashly laying open your heart, but that I think the danger to be apprehended from such lessons, is greater than the evil against which they are directed: for admonitions of this kind are so apt to be misunderstood, that, in aiming at what he thinks a necessary caution, a man is often led by them into the very opposite error, of a blameable and cunning reserve. He then entirely loses sight of that openness and candor of behavior, which I have recommended in a former letter. Besides, a very slight intercourse with the world invariably teaches every necessary reserve; and, if we gain it from our own experience, its value and utility will be far greater, than if it were acquired by the naked cautions of others. When we attain a more intimate knowledge of the world, we too often, without the aid of any cautionary advice, contract a selfish and niggardly want of confidence, which makes us distrustful of

every human being. For these reasons, I shall not recommend to you any other precaution, in the choice of your friends, than simply this: to select those only whom you know or believe to be honest, sober, and conscientious men, and particularly those who are not ashamed to be religious: for you have the best reason to think, that such men will not betray your confidence; whilst you may be very certain, that those who lead dishonest or dissolute lives, or show no respect for religion, and are but little anxious for their own characters, will be very unsafe guardians of another's secrets.

A wise man, however, will convert every one, even his worst enemy, into a friend. He will sagaciously take advantage of every hint, and every remark, however apparently insignificant: as well the passing observations which are not, as those which are, intended to reach him. He will not fail to reap some benefit, even from the sarcastic sneers of his enemies and the calumnies of scandal. He will not be so deaf and partial, as not to discover when he merits any part of the odium or blame which is cast upon him; but will hear it, though its whispers should be ever so much stifled, or ever so distant: and he will have

prudence and good sense sufficient, to perceive how far it is justly applied, and to alter his conduct so as not to merit a repetition of it. Thus, what less sensible men esteem highly injurious to their welfare and peace, will be rendered by him subservient to those objects which must ever be his first, his virtue and advancement in life.

But I can give you another caution, without any fear of its being misapplied. I have before advised a manly boldness in your intercourse with the world, and that advice I do not mean to retract or weaken; and, when I caution you against loquacity, I do not recommend any thing incompatible with my former admonition. A habit of chattering, and continually wagging the tongue with a silly unmeaning incoherence, is a very evident symptom of an empty head. I do not desire that a man should always talk with a dogmatic smattering of profundity; for that is equally absurd. A lightness of conversation is occasionally allowable, and is, indeed, frequently a very necessary and pleasing relaxation. What I decry, is an incessant rattling of vapid nothingness. Many weak men insult the female sex, by supposing them incapable of any other converse; and custom has so far sanctioned it, as the

invariable mode of addressing the ladies, that not a few of them expect it, and are satisfied with it. But if they consulted their own dignity, they would scorn the insignificant fribbles who thus insult them. The company of a lady certainly gives an additional charm to a light and witty conversation: but it is equally certain, that the language with which the ladies are generally addressed, although it has a profusion of the levity, has not an atom of the wit.

You should take care too, that you do not suffer yourself to contract a fondness for hearing your own voice. Silence is often the touchstone of wisdom: loquacity always the fireband of folly. No one will have a good opinion of the sense of him, who is always talking. This weakness invariably leads us to make ourselves the heroes of our discourse. When that is the case, so long as we can keep the subject alive, we are very little solicitous for the truth of our narrations; so fond are we of relating, what we always think our own glory, and so unwilling to resign the conversation. Where our stories are deficient, or do not, as we think, place our fame sufficiently high, we never fail to invent every necessary decoration; and at last become professed babblers,

and notorious liars. Thus you see the danger, and the despicable result, of a loquacious disposition. Your own good sense will preserve you from them. But I do not wish you to be dumb in society. Enter rationally and with becoming diffidence into conversation, and persevere in it, as long as you find it *agreeable to others*, and whilst truth and sense enable you to support it. There is no necessity for your showing an unwillingness to converse: it is only necessary that you check the first inclination to garrulity.

Do not let an ardour for displaying all the agreeable qualities, which you may fancy you possess tempt you to force them upon your company; for in so doing, you would only expose your contemptible ambition, without any gain. Mankind always take a more rational, and, consequently, more genuine and permanent, delight in those pleasures which display new charms when longer known, than in those which glitter in all their pomp on a first acquaintance. The latter look gaily for a moment, and then lose their relish, and become disgusting. They dazzle when first beheld; like the meteor which speedily vanishes, and leaves an offensive vapor behind. Do not lay yourself open to your company. Let

them search out your character by long acquaintance. They will then acquire a much more just knowledge of it. and one, in the end, far more beneficial to you. Whatever may be your merits, they will make a much better impression on the world, if they are discovered by it, than if you expose them unsought. In the former case, the world is pleased with its own penetration: and it then takes double delight in doing justice to the worth which it has detected. Learn to be satisfied with appearing a secondary personage in company, and do not pant to be noticed. Be content with appearing a common character, and one of the general class. If you deserve a higher rank, you will infallibly be elevated to it. But if you aim at distinction for wit or erudition, by talking, and strive to monopolize the attention of others, you will render yourself despised, and will soon be shunned. Usurp no more conversation than is consistent with a manly diffidence; and be diffident without ridiculous bashfulness. In short, in company, be an observer, more than a speaker. If you refrain from speaking, except when you are appealed to, you will exhibit so sure a symptom of good sense, that your companions will afford you ample opportunities of

delivering your opinion, and will be fond of appealing to you forthe sake of hearing it. It is by listening that you will obtain wisdom; and, until you have obtained it, you will, by pouring out the shallow contents of your ill-supplied head, make yourself ridiculous, and either will weaken the first seeds of wisdom, if not totally exhaust their strength, or will give them a very injurious direction.

LETTER X.

The merit of a charitable action, and the pleasure which ever attends a benevolent disposition, are, I hope, familiar to you. They certainly are too palpable, to leave any necessity for me to detail them; I shall, therefore, content myself with directing your attention to some of the abuses and misconceptions to which charity, the first of christian virtues, is subject. The cloak under which some hope to preserve their character for benevolence, without expense to themselves, is the fear of imposture. That there are many wretches who, under the assumed mask of poverty and hunger, extort a livelihood from the charitably disposed, is a lamentable fact It is no less true, that we are justified in attempting to guard against such impostors; and, indeed, the very interests of charity require that we should do so. To complain of this, almost necessary, caution, would be great injustice; and it is by no means what I condemn. The uncharitable cloak, which I have mentioned, is the per-

version of this caution to an improper purpose. Some persons, under the assumption of this wariness, refuse to *every* supplicant any assistance, which would diminish their own enjoyments or lighten their purses. They profess themselves to be most beneficently disposed, but lay the charge of imposture on every distressed being who puts them to the test. With hypocritical declarations of the best disposition, they never bestow a single mite in charity; and with hardened hearts, are incapable even of feeling common compassion. Of the two extremes, be assured, it is more praiseworthy, and more becoming a Christian, to give to all, than to none. But although I condemn this hardhearted want of charity, I by no means wish you to be unmindful of the proverb, which bids you "be just before you are generous." For if you exceed your means, whether by generosity, or by any other mode, you deprive yourself of the ability to satisfy those who have just demands on you; and you do in fact bestow what is not your own. Profuseness and prodigality are always blameable, even in charity. Give, even to your own impoverishment, if you please, but not to the impoverishment of your creditors. Some really well disposed, but mista-

ken people, practise a local charity, and assist those only who belong to the same parish, or profess the same religious tenents with themselves; or they confine their benevolence within similar small and arbitrary boundaries. But it should be instilled into such little-minded Christians, that true charity is of no religion, and no sect, and knows no local restrictions. Charity is the vital essence of Christianity; a Christian is a citizen of the world; and, in discharging the duties of the faith he professes, is sensible of no diversity of climates, and no statistic or religious demarcations.

There is another branch of charity, of the merit of which, were we to judge by their conduct, we should suppose mankind to be almost wholly ignorant. For although we may be laudably punctual in all the other duties of this virtue, yet the best of us feel no repugnance to giving publicity to the errors of others, and have no scruples to deter us from picking holes in a declinsng character. This is thought fair game, for the destruction of which we need no qualification. But it is truly a most unchristianlike sin. We check the progress, which the unfortunate objects of our scandal may be making towards virtue;

and, by publishing their failings, damp their exertions to atone for their faults, and redeem their reputation. We render them so hopeless of restoring themselves to esteem, that they are often driven by despair into the worst haunts of infamy. At last, by this babbling hard-heartedness, they are confirmed in wickedness, to which they had at first yielded through weakness only, and from which they had ever since repentantly endeavoured to return. In short, this tattling custom is a most detestable, disgraceful, and injurious sin, utterly inconsistent with a worthy and honourable character. I am unable to conceive what pleasure can be derived, or what benefit can be expected, from destroying the good fame of a fellow creature. Indeed, the tales which are thus passed, from mouth to mouth, with such a greedy volubility, are very commonly falsehoods, fabricated by the enemies of those whom they traduce. For all the tale-bearers know to the contrary, not one scandalous story may ever contain a syllable of truth: or if perchance it should be true, it has most probably been wormed from the confidence of friendship, by some prying demon of defamation. But, true or false, a scrap of scandal is always valuable; and like a

guinea, finds universal currency. We are, however, unlike the merchant, far too greedy for the coin, to examine its purity. In conclusion, remember, that whether an opprobrious tale be false or true, it can never be honourable, never be justifiable, to circulate a story, the publicity of which may injure another's reputation, or retard his return to virtue.

"Charity covereth a multitude of sins," is a sacred saying, which you will often hear quoted. But there are very few who understand it correctly; and it is generally used but as "a cloak of maliciousness." The word charity, in its proper sense, signifies *the spirit of benevolence;* and in this sense alone is it every where used in the Scriptures. I am afraid it tells but little in favour of mankind, that they have so impoverished and contracted the word, as to confine its signification to the bestowing of money, one very small branch of its original meaning: for it rarely is used now for any other purpose. The Greek word, which is translated "covereth," signifies, properly, to throw a covering over, or to hide; and would, there-fore, in modern language, be better rendered "concealeth." The real purport of the sentence is, "the true spirit of bene-

volence concealeth the faults of others:" for if you examine the context, you will perceive, that it is not our own sins, which charity is said to cover. This interpretation is periphrastic, but it will give you a better notion of the meaning, than I could convey in fewer words.

LETTER XI.

The acidity of human nature is never worse displayed, than in those tart critiques on the characters of others, in which we are all too apt to indulge. We are vain of the ability of saying a severe thing, and are too meanly proud of the abominable talent, to see how much more creditable to our hearts it would be, to say something kind and charitable. We fancy that it reflects some lustre on our genius, when we can adopt a shrewd acerbity of language, which makes modesty tremble before us; and yet a little observation would show the folly of such a notion. A mere fool, if he have a sour and ill-favored temper, will, almost from natural instinct, or certainly from habit, emit, without premeditation, smarter and more malicious remarks, than the labor and study of the finest talents can invent. That benevolence is one of the first of virtues, is a truth most plain and undeniable. What then can evince more stupidity of intellect, more folly in judment, than the neglect

and contradiction of such an evident axiom? If virtue be the greatest wisdom, vice must be the greatest folly. If virtue be the only road to happiness, and benevolence the sweetest guide, it must confess a total destitution of sense, to act so as to renounce them both.

No notion can be more mistaken, than that fear is a more pleasing service than love. To endeavor to gain respect by impressing fear, is nothing less than to bid defiance to the whole race of man. To seek it by inciting love, is to form an alliance of the most endearing durability. To be feared, is in plainer terms to be hated; to become an insulated being, at whom his fellow creatures are pointing every evil wish, which the human heart can frame. It is to place one's self in the situation of the hedge-hog, beset by every dog in the village; he may draw blood from many a nose, but he will be defeated at last. The anxiety which this rule of conduct produces is unceasing. Life is exhausted in stratagems and schemes for terrifying to a reluctant submission, those fellow beings, whom by gentle affability and benevolent treatment, we might engage to serve us with a willing perseverance which no circumstances could diminish. To act on this

principle of being feared, is to draw forth all the mean and grovelling passions of human nature; it is striving to effect the highest end by the grossest means. The vilest mongrel may be made to fear; but man has nobler affections to guide him. You may, by terror, compel him to a base servility, but never to an honest respect. Interest the heart, and you will gain an ally, which will be as active and as constant whilst you sleep, as can be the most abject subservience, whilst you are painfully waking to vivify its reluctant embers. Act upon the good affections of mankind, and their regard will be a part of your existence, which it will require no art to support. But act upon their fear, and when your arts are dormant, you will be in perpetual danger of a worse revenge than Polyphemus suffered from Ulysses. The service of affection anticipates our wishes, without any extraordinary impulsion; the service of fear must be urged and exhausted by perpetual violence, and will yet be but imperfect.

Indulge not, I entreat you, in those tortuous sneers and dissertations on others, which occupy so large a portion of daily conversation; and fail not, by your silence, or your retreat, to show

your dislike to such scenes.* What are these acrimonious discourses, but proofs that we covet rather the infamy of acerbity, than the honor of charity; that we wish rather to see modesty and mildness quake before us, than to see them smile with confidence in our presence; that we desire to be feared rather than loved? If there be one spark of natural feeling, one drop of the milk of human kindness, remaining in our breasts, we must ever experience, after the elation of triumph has subsided, a conscious glow of shame and guilt pervade our hearts, when we reflect on our criminal bitterness. How superior is that vivid sensation, which warms us after a charitable defence of some persecuted character! If human nature and human reason can discover any truth, there is no more certain axiom than this; that kindness is ever, *ever* more honorable than severity.

No one surely can be fool enough to suppose, when he sports his acrid taunts on another, that his hearers will spare him in his absence. He will be sadly mistaken, should be conceived such an idle imaginaiion. He will, of all others, be

* *The chapter of scandal generally begins with sneers on the dress of the absentees.*

the character most open to assault. If he unwisely elevate himself as the bitter censor of others, his audience will be the first to retort his sarcasms on his own head: and every one will be ready to pluck from him, as from the daw, the infamous plumes which he has been weak enough to assume.

LETTER XII.

It is by avoiding the first steps and the most distant approaches to vice, that we shall most securely preserve ourselves from her dominion. *Nemo repente fuit turpissimus.* We do not step at once into the whirlpool of wickedness; but when we have suffered ourselves to be drawn into the outer circle of the vortex, it is very rarely that we can escape from the destructive eddy. *Dimidum facti, qui cepit, habet,* said Horace, and it is a truth applicable to every thing. When a man has yielded to one of the first temptations of sin, he is already half a victim to its tyranny. It is, therefore, by resisting the first allurements, that we shall be safe; and as these are the most easily overcome, we have every motive for opposing them.

Drunkenness is one of the most common and most detrimental commencements of a vicious career. It steals upon the weak and unguarded, and, having robbed them of all self-command, prompts them to every disgraceful act. The ef-

fect of a first intoxication is always to render us less scrupulous in future, till at last it becomes our boast and our custom. We then dignify the habit with the name of conviviality, and nick-name ourselves and our companions, jolly fellows. We degrade ourselves, formed as we are in the image of our Creator, to brutes devoid of sense and humanity; and lay ourselves open to the incitements of every bad passion, and the designs of every artful enemy. We stamp on us the characters of unprofitable members of society, and effectually exclude ourselves from all the blessings of life. Among the active and better part of our countrymen, ebriety is, I believe, far less frequent, than it was a few years ago. For this we have, in a great measure, to thank the heavy tax upon wine, other liquors being, happily, still most commonly thought too vulgar for any but the lower orders. However, by those who are insensible to the charms of rational conversation, and the amusement of books, and who are free from the necessity of active employment, this detestable and pernicious vice is still resorted to, as the associate of gambling, to assist in wasting hours, which they know not how to employ with credit. They swallow stupidity in bumpers, and

drown their reason, the similitude of God, in the beastly draughts. Thus wine, which was intended by Providence for the sustenance and solace of man, is misused, and he makes himself a brute by it. Can there be any pleasure in drinking without desire, in heating the body, in overfilling the veins, in relinquishing the equipoise, or in torturing the head? Can there be any delight in rolling in the high-way with indecent brutality, in alarming or disgusting a peaceable house, or in snoring, with the most offensive beastliness, upon the deluged table? What an object is the intoxicated man? How is the drunkard feared, ridiculed, despised, and abhorred! This inhuman vice, too, is one which holds out the least temptation, and which we have the most forcible reasons to deter us from. Our very nature revolts from the over-repletion. None but the most insensibly weak and unguarded can be betrayed unawares. For if we exert but an atom of that common sense of self-preservation, with which even the fool is endowed, we cannot be ignorant of what will be the effect of a continued repetition of the superfluous draughts, which we are imbibing. Yet are there some weak and despicable men, old as well as young, who glory in the in-

famous distinction of being *jolly fellows*; a cant phrase for perpetual drunkards. Such persons appear to think it a laudable quality, to be able to swallow successive quarts of wine, forgetting that, even if the distinction be meritorious, every coal-heaver is their superior in practice and quantity. Would it not appear preposterously gluttonous, to hear a man boast that he could devour two sheep at one meal? And does it evince less brutality, can it be less disgraceful, to exult in one's ability to swallow the inebriating contents of many bottles at one sitting? for my own part, I would rather hear a man brag of the former, than of the latter. Excess in each is equally disgusting and bestial; but I think the latter the most unnatural. Some votaries and advocates of drunkenness would, perhaps, seek to excuse it, by saying that conviviality, pleasant society, and amusing discourse, may lead them unintentionally to excess. But these paltry defences cannot avail them. Let the conversation at one of these convivial, pleasant, and amusing meetings, be recorded; and then let us see, what instruction, utility, or wit, there is to beguile. It is not possible that there can be any: for discourse with either of these recommendations, can

never be maintained by the wine-bibber over his bottle; nor can such discourse either tempt or admit, a perpetual recurrence to the bottle. Beware, then, of yielding to the dominion of wine; and particularly beware of giving yourself up half to its tyranny, by a first excess. You will be urged and bantered by incautious companions, who will use every means they can devise to stimulate you to join them. But be assured, that in this, as in all other things, those who would tempt you to an act, which you have been taught to consider wicked or unbecoming, are striving to seduce you to danger and dishonor. Remember, that no arguments, however specious, and no examples, however general, can take from indecency its disgrace, or from impiety and dishonesty their wickedness and danger. Those misguided companions, who will endeavor to win you to their bad habits, may, perhaps, intend no injury to you; they may at other times be lively and good humored associates: but you must not suffer yourself to be hoodwinked to their errors by the pleasure you enjoy in their society. For whatever may be their intention, their purpose is highly detrimental, and its mischief will be incalculable.

I will fill my paper by recommending to you an unremitting habit of early rising, and, as a necessary forerunner, going early to rest: very few words are necessary to display the benefit of such a custom. Suppose you rise but two hours before the sluggish part of the world, you will be a gainer of one day in six; and what a valuable prize is that! At the end of your life, you will have lived many years more, than he who has been as long in the world, but has smothered his time in the dark enjoyments of the sluggard. In the uninterrupted hours of morning, you may dispatch your daily business, and the rest of the day you may devote to amusement. You will keep your body and mind in health and vigor, whilst the whole frame, both mental and corporeal, of the sluggard, will be wasted and enervated, and all his faculties stupified. He will become peevish and dissatisfied; whilst you will receive from your better habits, a continual glow of cheerfulness and good humor. But if you mispend the hours which nature has designed for sleep, you will vainly hope for these good effects: for how can he who constrains his faculties to midnight vigils, expect that they can be recruited at sunrise? Greater evils, however, attend this noctur-

nal wakefulness. Midnight is the season for wickedness. At that dark hour sin prowls around every stirring mortal, ready with all her worst weapons, to attack him in his most unguarded moments. All the temptations to bad actions are abroad at this season, and he who is awake to be assailed by them, is very ill armed for the encounter. But if you are a late riser, you must, of necessity, retire late. The benefits and the evils are mutual. The advantages are only to be attained, by early hours, both in the morning and at night.

LETTER XIII.

Dress is attended to by the fop, as the most important office of life, whilst by the more sensible part of mankind it is generally esteemed a thing of minor consequence. I can, however, by no means consent to treat it lightly. It is true, that it is far beneath the great duties and virtues of life, but yet, among the legitimate means of our advancement, it well deserves our regard. I have often reminded you, that we are justified in using every innocent art for our welfare; and that it is even our duty to employ for that end every guiltless assistance we can obtain. Of all the smaller auxiliaries which offer for so desirable a purpose, I consider a good style of dress as the most effectual, and the most easily attainable. Cleanliness is certainly sufficient for our comfort, if the subject be viewed abstractly; but that is not the way to estimate correctly the effect of what never exists but in relation to, and conjunction with other things. If we live in the world, and take a part in society, our pursuits and measures must be regulated by the habits and

prejudices of mankind. The world, like an individual, will have its whims and fashions; and we have free liberty to indulge them, so long as they do not infringe upon our integrity. As none of its caprices are more harmless, or more widely extended, than those of dress, self defence alone would induce us to adopt the current modes. There is no necessity for running into the buffoonery of fashion, and becoming professed coxcombs. Such blind idolatry indicates extreme weakness of intellect, and an absolute want of good sense. What I commend, is that discriminating attention to fashion, which is called dressing genteelly. Those who go beyond that "o'erstep the modesty" of good breeding and good sense, and render themselves as conspicuously ridiculous as would those who should follow the style of a former century. The well dressed man carries about him an open and universal passport to all societies. It depends upon his future demeanor, to confirm or annul the recommendation of his appearance; but, by being well dressed, he easily obtains the grand preliminary, an introduction: and the first impression is in his favor. No one will reject his advances, or refuse to acknowledge him as an acquaintance. But be a man ever so

deserving or agreeable, he will nevertheless find it a very arduous acclivity, to introduce himself to the world, and in his progress will be subjected to vexations, rebuffs, and continual checks, unless in his dress he exhibit the appearance of a gentleman. If he bear not about him that recommendation, he will find himself neglected and despised by most people; and generally by those who are most able to assist him, and would perhaps be most willing to do so, did he, by showing more regard for the little whims of the world, take the proper steps to introduce himself. The world invariably neglects and impedes, in his first advances, him who will not submit to the caprices of society. But there is an universal prejudice against those, who go yet a step further, and not only refuse to adopt the prevailing fashion, but totally neglect all attention to their habiliments There have been certainly many great characters, who have overcome this prejudice, and, by the preponderance of their merits in more important matters, have been esteemed, notwithstanding their filthy indecency of dress. But you must remember, that this impropriety has always been lamented, as a prominent defect in their reputation; and

that, by universal acknowledgment, these men, great as they may have been, would have been much more estimable characters, had they been more regardful of decorum, and of the customs of society. The motive, however, which influences any one to neglect his dress, or to show a disregard for any other of the trivial prejudices of the world, is either indolence or pride. The indolent man is ever a contemptible being. Negligence of dress, proceeding from indolence, is always the first of the many detestable consequences which flow from that source. There is, in fact, no more trouble in dressing like a gentleman, than in habiting one's self with the carelessness of an ideot. If we do clothe ourselves, the former is as easy an undertaking as the latter, and far more creditable. The truth is, the indolent man is too lazy to employ his faculties to discover this fact; and therefore sluggishly imagines, that it must be less trouble and exertion to put on a dress which carries negligence and sloth in its appearance, than one which bespeaks neatness and getility. But a little minded pride is generally the cause of this slovenliness: and no more disgraceful cause can exist. It is a mean and contemptible gradation

of that infamous spirit which prompted Eratostratus to destroy the temple of Diana at Ephesus, that he might be known by the base distinction of an incendiary, rather than posterity should be ignorant of his name and existence. Thus, also, little minds aim at reputation, by establishing for themselves the character of slovens; ignorant too of the fallacy of their policy; for every one passes them with undeeding contempt, and no one desires to know the names of such despicable creatures.

Being studious, therefore, to bear about us this universal passport, our next object should be, to accompany the dress of the gentleman with the manners of one; and to confirm, by our politeness, the favorable impression of our appearance. You must be sensible, that, great as may be the advantages which our dress may obtain for us at our introduction, we shall invalidate and defeat them, if our deportment be ungraceful, or deficient in good breeding. What is precisely good breeding, you will learn more easily, and with more accuracy, from a silent and continual observation in genteel company, than from any delineation which I can give you. But, as general and fixed principles, you may be assured,

that true politeness consists in an easy, diffident, natural and unassuming demeanor, and in carrying every thing with good humor and moderation. To force a subject with which your auditors are fatigued, or which they are unwilling to attend to, and to make one's self at any time the hero of the discourse, are certain proofs of vulgarity and folly; and in judging of the inclination of your company, you will do best to understand the first hint, and a very slight intimation of their wishes. You will be certain to render yourself an object of ridicule, and, consequently, to fix on you the character of an ill-bred man, if you strive to force your nature, with the hope of shining in all the gay varieties of life. Be satisfied with pleasing at those times only, when you can do it with ease to yourself. For if it be a pain to you, that is an infallible criterion by which to judge of the sensations of others: if your nature be overstrained, their civility is heavily taxed in attending to you. You will find many who will display talents for pleasing, which you may feel beyond your power: and yon will act wisely by not endeavoring to imitate them. In the imitation, you will only evince the crude awkwardness of an ape, and expose yourself to pity

or derision; things very repulsive to a character for good breeding: *Non omnia possumus omnes.* You will shew your powers, whenever circumstances favor you, and triumph in your turn. Never let this petty ambition persuade you to obtrude yourself, and try to bring matters by force into the favorable channel. Wait till they take the turn spontaneously, which they will generally do at some time. Ease is the very essence of politeness. If force be used, politeness is banished.

In striving to gain a knowledge of what constitutes good breeding, and to acquire the manners of a well-bred man, you should not wish to hurry yourself at once to a distinguished elevation in polite society. Be satisfied with acquiring your character by degrees, and you will then in fact do it more speedily, and much more effectually. For this purpose, your observation should be mute and steady. Show no eagerness to become a prominent member of the polite world; and then whilst you are diffidently acquiring your qualifications, you will be gradually invited, and imperceptibly led, to the object of your aim. By diligent observation, and an unassuming manliness of deportment, you will

insure the attainment of the qualifications of a gentleman, and will in the end be well received in every company.

When you have done or said a thing, which pleases, or is applauded, be satisfied with your first success, and do not repeat it, nor attempt to extend it. Many weak men are so elated on such occasions, that they hope for the fame of being men of distinguished genius. In order to attain that, they confuse the ears of every one by the continual repetition of their wit (most probably their only wit, and the product of chance ;) and thus foolishly drain to the dregs, the nauseous dregs, a beverage at first, perhaps, but moderately sweet. When any luck procures a little applause to such men, they overstrain it to the very extreme, absurdly imagining that they shall thus attract new praise, and insure its continuance : but it is the novelty which pleases; by repetition, our wit first loses its relish, then palls upon the taste, and at last disgusts. If we overstrain our actions, or our subject, every one perceives that we owe our first success to chance, and our folly becomes absurd and contemptible : the novelty is gone, and no substitute will please. The time-strioken dowager may deck

herself in modish gaiety, and give an artificial rosiness to her cheeks: but youth is the sex's charm, and that she cannot put on. *Est modus in rebus*, should always be in your mind; and you should learn to use success with reason and discretion. The conduct of those weak men, who overstrain their wit, or wear it thread-bare by repetition, *nec modum habet, neque consilium.*

LETTER XIV.

As your mind acquires vigor, and a habit of reflection and enquiry, you will probably observe, that mankind, in the routine of life, act more from prejudice and custom, or, I may say, from instinct than from any other motive; generally without reason, and often in plain and palpable error. From this submissive adherence to habit, the most capacious minds frequently are not exempt. The eye, when accustomed to an object, becomes insensible to its deformities. Generation after generation, we are educated for the most part in the same unvaried forms, which, like an iron girth on a sappling, press more strongly on our minds, as the latter acquire substance and vigor; till finally these dogmatic ceremonies are fixed as a creed, which we fancy to be a fundamental law of our existence. To these ancient, and often unfathomable rules, we submit with the unenquiring obedience, which ought to be the homage and the patrimony of truth alone; and insolent and contemptuous disrespect is the reward of those, who

strive to draw the veil from our eyes, and expose to us undisguised, the phantoms which we have long cherished with such besotted obsequiousness. Education and habit have thus too preponderating an influence, and we ought not to resign our understanding to their guidance: nor ought we to give implicit credence to the current opinions of mankind. It is an axiom with a certain set of moralists, that the public never err in judgment, and that the general opinion of the world is always correct. This notion has been adopted and applied to politics, by two public characters of very opposite principles, Lord Mansfield, and the author of Junius' Letters. But to this palsying infallibility of prevailing opinions I can by no means assent. It may be a very good speculative theory, that the converging judgment of many must be superior to the sentiments of a few or of an individual; but the practical testimony of experience will prove, that the many frequently err, whilst the slighted opinions of the few are ultimately confirmed. When the body of mankind adopt an error, they always carry it to an extreme. For these reasons it is, that I am an advocate for the full exercise of private judgment and enquiry. Truth cannot suffer, error will be

the only victim. Prevailing customs, and established opinions, should certainly receive the respect of all men, and ought not to be attacked, but after the fullest scrutiny, and the most mature conviction; and often not even then. There may be many reigning errors in opinion and practice, which are the foundation of the peace and comfort of society; and many of small intrinsic importance, upon which, nevertheless, things of magnitude may depend, and the disturbance of which might create great confusion and discord. Here even truth might do mischief. The repose of these errors is of too much importance to mankind, for a judicious and well-disposed man to molest them.

These observations apply with much force to religion. Christians are divided into numerous sects, but Christianity is the profession of all; and various as are the ritual observances of the different sects, they may all be equally acceptable to the universal object of them. The *heart* is the true fountain and mirror of piety; and since that, inscrutable to man, is open to God, it is dishonoring him to imagine, that he can consider external forms as increasing or diminishing our merit.

The New Testament has admirably defined true religion in these simple words, (I quote from memory,) "To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God." These are plain and expressive terms. If we make them the universal canon, (and surely we are right in doing so,) by which to judge all polemic disputes and controversial questions, I fear the sentence will be, that those questions and disputes have no connection with true religion and real Christianity. Christianity is a broad and extensive principle; it can comprehend its professors of all denominations, whether their outward ceremonies be performed in a church or in a conventicle, whether by the mass or by the taciturnity of the Quakers. Peace is its great end and object; and none can oppose that, and consequently less deserve the appellation of Christians, than those who by raising new controversies or awakening dormant disputes, create or promote the virulent heart-burnings, the animosities and disturbances, to which mankind are so peculiarly prone. Far more Christian is he who ministers to the repose and oblivion of all subjects of dispute, whether he conceive that they sleep in truth or in error. Upon this principle of promoting peace, I would always observe

the rites of the prevailing and established religion of the country in which I might dwell; even if I should not consider its tenents the most correct.

What I recommend, as the close of these arguments, is to take nothing for granted and certain, but what you cannot inquire into; to pay a sincere deference to the general opinion, and yet not blindly yield your understanding to its guidance: to exercise and exert your own faculties and judgment, and aim, by free and unimpassioned research, to acquire a just conviction on all subjects; to act according to the honest persuasion of your conscience, yet always careful how you publish it, if it differ from prevailing notions; and often, and indeed most commonly, to keep it closely locked within your own bosom. For it is more easy to detect error, than to overthrow it; and though you may have sufficient penetration to rectify your own opinions, the judgment necessary to correct the erroneous notions of the world, is a very rare qualification.

I hope I am intelligible, but I fear that the many interruptions which it has experienced, have rendered my letter desultory, and unconnected in its reasoning.

LETTER XV.

It is not because I think it a thing of small importance, that I have so long delayed inculcating the necessity of a strict performance of your duty to God, and the benefits of a religious disposition. But I have been more silent on these immediate subjects, because my purpose has been, to direct your attention to things of a different nature, and to those objects which were more peculiarly temporal. I have, nevertheless, constantly drawn from the purer source of the Holy Scriptures. I have throughout been careful that the conduct which I have recommended has been such as will, at the same time, promote your advancement in life, and be in obedience to the will of God. That life which has any other director, must follow a guide at least mistaken and dangerous, if not criminal; for the Scriptures, the tablets of his will, afford every assistance which can be necessary to lead us in safety and honesty through this transitory

existence. You have been educated in a systematic habit of religion and piety, and I hope you will never disgrace so proper an education, by forgetting the wise lessons which it has instilled, or neglecting the offices of religion Never forget that there is a penetrating eye, which witnesses every action of your life, although buried in secresy inscrutable to men; and that from that eye, not even a thought, although it should never escape your lips, can possibly be concealed; and remember that this all-seeing eye is ever over you and in all places. Then, if the love of virtue cannot deter you from yielding to vice, the fear of this constant inspection may, perhaps, restrain you, as it ought, from quitting the path of rectitude. Above all things, let not the sneers of your erring companions, a fancied necessity, nor any other motive, inveigle you to neglect either your private devotions, or the public service of the church. To omit these are generally the first steps to an irreligious and impious life. I sadly fear that private devotion is almost banished from the number of our daily employments. As to public worship, it is a disgraceful fact, that a very great prrportion of the men of business, to their shame be it said, and

particularly those of the law, not only constantly and systematically fail to attend divine service but they also devote the whole of the Lord's-day to those avocations, which he has explicitly forbidden. Many even make it their more laborious day. Six days out of seven are amply sufficient for the business of the week; and one day in seven can never be considered an unreasonable requisition by the Creator and Preserver of our being; by Him who could annihilate, as easily as he formed us. Shamefully great is the number of those, who can in no other way employ their time to their satisfaction, and yet will rather waste it in the most insignificant manner, than spend any portion of it in the house of their God. It is very true, that, as some theorists maintain, a man *may* be as religious during a pleasant walk in the fields, or elsewhere, as in a church. But I would ask, as a general question, whether he really is so, or is likely to be so? It evinces a very insufficient knowledge of human nature, to disclaim the utility, or even the necessity, of external observances, for calling the mind of man into internal action. No reasoning, no false plea of compulsion, no sophistry, can palliate that systematic non-

performance of public worship, which now prevails so very generally.

Be assured, that a life of religion and piety is alone pleasing to God. An unremitting fulfilment of the few and easy duties, which they enjoin, is a task congenial to our nature; and it is a perversion of our nature, which seduces so many of us to neglect them. God has placed no difficult labor before us; but yet, to help us in performing it, he has in the Holy Scriptures, with abundant kindness, given us a perpetual memento and assistant, to which we can, at all times, refer for our guidance. It is our duty and interest, to make ourselves well acquainted with these treasuries of wisdom. They are replete with salutary lessons, applicable to all the possible circumstances of our existence. He who follows any other instructor, will surely at some time, perhaps too late, discover to his sorrow, that his ill-chosen preceptor has led him far away from the fruitful paths of virtue and happiness, to the wilderness of guilt and misery. A life of religion is not a gloomy and desert existence; but, on the contrary, piety is the most effectual source of cheerfulness and contentment. God has not made us acquainted with him, that

our knowledge might be an antidote to our happiness. He has commanded us to fear him, for this reason only; that if our love of him cannot keep us true to virtue, our dread may deter us from falling into the snares of vice. Thus is he always kind; and he even puts on his terrors for our benefit. The doctrines of the religion of Jesus Christ, are those of the most genuine cheerfulness of heart; and it is by wickedness alone, that so pure a source can be made to produce any worse effect. The Christian religion is intended for the happiness of man; and when God hallowed the day on which he rested from his own works, and commanded his creatures also "to do no manner of work," he meant to bestow upon us one appointed day of peace and freedom from labor, and that day he denominated his own. Surely, then, the consequences must be full of danger to those, who impiously despise so great kindness, and disobey so clear and decided a command. He does not bid us to devote the sacred day to melancholy and dejecting reflections; he asks but the sacrifice of a few short hours for meditation, thanksgiving and prayer; and in the remaining hours we may enjoy the exhilirating pleasure, which a true

sense of his goodness cannot fail to inspire. Our Creator wishes to see us always enjoying a happy cheerfulness; and that man is no real Christian, who imagines that joy is forbidden or restrained by piety True piety is the source of every joy. Far is it, too, from constraining us to live secluded from the world, or forbidding us to take any concern in the affairs of society. Mortals were created to support and assist each other; and every rational man must be sensible, that a well regulated society is the best preservative of the general security of all. It is, therefore, a duty imposed by God, and recommended by our own interest, that we should use our best faculties for the maintenance of peace and good order. We shall always find, that the only sure guides to those desirable ends, are the lessons of piety, benevolence, and honesty, which are found in such kind profusion in the book of God. His sacred book is a book of joy and peace; and his hallowed day is a day of cheerfulness. No command of his forbids our taking part in all the concerns of the world, and acting in the various offices and affairs of society, so long as we preserve our integrity, and do not offend our consciences. Religion, indeed, is but another name for morality.

Religion, virtue, and morality, are convertible terms, however vulgar misapplication may separate them. He who leads a life of moral virtue, lays a sure foundation for the truest religion and piety.

LETTER XVI.

I SHALL now briefly close my account with you, by a few general and salutary remarks. You will often, in your intercourse with the world, find many things at variance with your own fixed ideas, and the general and received opinions of good men. You will find some, tempted by a mistaken notion of their interest; others, seduced by wicked intentions; and many, actuated by no apparent motive, who are sedulously and unremittingly striving to strip vice of her deformity, and to fix it upon virtue. You will observe them endeavoring to render palatable vices of the blackest dye, and crimes of the most dangerous example, by clothing them with the gentler names of *failings*, *errors*, *faults*, *imprudences*, *weaknesses*, and *indiscretions*. But "woe unto those," says Isaiah, "who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." You will frequently hear some unfortunate fellow creature scan-

dalized with the most uncharitable acrimony, for yielding to the insidious arts of some infamous enemy to virtue, by the same person who will palliate the conduct of the base seducer of innocence,* by some of the gentle names which I have enumerated. These dangerous arts, for rendering vice amiable, and virtue uninviting, are even disseminated by the press, which is suborned to assist the detestable cause: a cause whose object is, by putting virtue out of sight, and softening the blackest crimes almost into estimable qualities, to seduce the unguarded from their integrity, and impel them to reject or pervert the enlightened wisdom of the Gospel. These treacherous doctrines have been interwoven with novels and interesting tales, calculated to incite the attention of youth. Their emotions being resisted by these seducing narratives, the young are the more easily led astray by the soft appellations given to vice. They are inattentive to the delusion, pity the vicious, and at last applaud the varnished wickedness, and give it the name of virtue. But be

* *I do not use this phrase, "Seducer of innocence," in any confined sense, in which it may be commonly applied. I mean by it, to signify any person who seduces others from virtue.*

assured, that whatever would rob virtue of that respect, which you have been taught to consider her due; or would render vice less odious than you have been taught to esteem it, must be intrinsically wicked and ill-designed. Be not tempted by any artful stratagems, or the seductive "magic of a name," to consider vice otherwise than infamous, however invitingly she may he arrayed; and do not suffer the influence of virtue to be stolen from your mind, however abused or meanly esteemed she may be, by men of bad hearts or misguided heads. For wickedness never can be laudable, virtue never undeserving.

Do not, however, allow your ardor, even in a good cause, to carry you beyond the boundaries of justice. Be not hasty to condemn the actions of any one. Recollect how often you have been misunderstood, and how frequently you have severely felt the harsh judgment of others, when your own actions have been misinterpreted: and if your own conduct has been thus hardly used, is it not probable that you may, in your haste, do the same injustice to another? Reflect on this, and learn from it to be cool and slow in your judgment of others. By precipitancy you may injure them, and

endanger your own peace. But even if they be wrong, consider the temptations which assailed them and the weakness of man; and particularly be sensible of your own weakness, under similar temptations. But, above all things, recollect the mildness of your Redeemer, who was "sent to call sinners to repentance:" and if he, the pattern of perfection, judged with temperance, and reprehended the wicked with kindness, how criminal are we sinful mortals, to be hasty and merciless in our sentiments of each other!

In your search for virtue, and in treading the various tracks which I have recommended to you, your pursuit must be continual and undeviating. An occasional liberal or honorable action, and a few exemplary instances of good behavior, are not sufficient. Such a temporising conduct is infamous and hypocritical. It shows that you are sensible of the merits of virtue; but that you are aiming only at a specious reputation, without any anxiety to deserve a good one. Such hypocrisy may, perhaps, impose on the unthinking and ignorant, and you may by it gain the applause of those whose approbation is of the least value. But you will obtain no more

than that. With all good and honorable men you will ever be a suspected character; and when once suspicion is attached to you, you can never rise to happiness or distinction. The praise of the heedless and ignorant is easily obtained; but, believe me, he who aims only at that low popularity, can never rise. To arrive at honor, you must gain the esteem of the considerate, the well-informed, and the most respectable part of society. He who aims at this, is still respected and applauded, although untoward circumstances should prevent his success; whilst he who builds his hopes on any inferior applause, can never attain any, but a very transient and ill supported, and never respected elevation.

Nor are you to estimate your own merit by a comparison with others; for such a criterion will always be false. Yet are there many who console themselves, and lull their consciences, by saying, "we are no worse than our neighbors," or by naming others who are worse than themselves. Remember always, that virtue cannot be estimated by comparison. She is intrinsically meritorious and honorable, and we must seek her for herself alone. We shall vainly hope for her approbation, if we content ourselves

merely with seeing some behind us, and few or none before us. To speak more plainly;—unless we be prompted by the real love of virtue and integrity, our merit will be nugatory. We must live in piety and honesty, *for the sake of* piety and honesty, and not satisfy ourselves with being as pious and as honest as some others, or more so than many. We must be *really* and *truly* virtuous, and not virtuous by comparison. For as integrity is ever meritorious under all circumstances, so is the want of it disgraceful, even though many neglect it more than ourselves, and none be much nearer to it than we are. If we be contented with comparative merit, we shall very seldom be really meritorious, and frequently far otherwise.

It has been my object to warn you against vice; and, in so doing, I have been often under the necessity of laying before you the depravity of mankind. But you must not form any misanthropic notions of your fellow creatures from the pictures which I have drawn. Society has to boast of many pious, charitable, and excellent characters; many who reflect a comparative lustre on our existence. These you will always know; and there has, therefore, been no necessity for me

to bring them to your notice. My aim has been, to unrobe before you thefalse pretenders to virtue, and to exhibit in their deformity the avowed followers of vice. May my aim be successful, by arming you against the snares of the former, and riveting your hatred of the latter.

DR. WATTS'

ADVICE

TO A

YOUNG MAN

ON HIS

ENTRANCE INTO THE WORLD.

CURINO was a young man, brought up to a reputable trade; the term of his apprenticeship was almost expired, and he was contriving how he might venture into the world with safety, and pursue business with innocence and success. Among his near *kindred*, *Serenus* was one, a gentleman of considerable character in the sacred profession; and after he had consulted with his father, who was a merchant of great esteem and experience, he also thought fit to seek a word of advice from the divine. *Serenus* had such a respect for his young kinsman, that he set his thoughts at work on this subject, and with some tender expressions, which melted the

youth into tears, he put into his hand a paper of his best counsels. *Curino* entered upon business, pursued his employment with uncommon advantage, and under the blessing of Heaven advanced himself to a considerable estate. He lived with honor in the world, and gave a lustre to the religion which he professed: and after a long life of piety and usefulness, he died with a sacred composure of soul, under the influences of Christian hope. Some of his neighbors wondered at his felicity in this world, joined with so much innocence, and such severe virtue. But after his death, this paper was found in his closet, which was drawn up by his kinsman in holy orders, and was supposed to have a large share in procuring his happiness.

ADVICE TO A YOUNG MAN.

RULE I.

KINSMAN, I presume you desire to be happy here and hereafter; you know there are a thousand difficulties which attend this pursuit, some of them perhaps you foresee, but there are multitudes which you could never think of. Never trust therefore to *your own understanding* in the things of this world, where you can have the advice a *wise and faithful friend*; nor

dare venture the more important concerns of your soul and your eternal interests in the world to come, upon the mere *light of nature*, and the *dictates of your own reason*; since the *word of God*, and the advice of Heaven, lie in your hands. Vain and thoughtless indeed are those children of pride, who choose to turn heathens in the midst of Great-Britain; who live upon the mere religion of nature and their own stock, when they have been trained up among all the superior advantages of *Christianity*, and the blessings of divine revelation and grace.

RULE II.

Whatsoever your circumstances may be in this world, still value your *Bible*, as your best treasure; and whatsoever be your employment here, still look upon religion as your best business. Your Bible contains eternal life in it, and all the riches of the upper world; and religion is the only way to become a possessor of them.

RULE III.

To direct your carriage toward *God*, converse particularly with the book of Psalms; *David* was a man of sincere and eminent devotion. To behave aright among *men*, acquaint yourself

with the whole book of Proverbs: *Solomon* was a man of large experience and wisdom. And to perfect your directions in both these, read the Gospels and the Epistles; you will find the best of rules and the best of examples there, and those more immediately suited to the Christian life.

RULE IV.

As a *man*, maintain strict temperance and sobriety, by a wise government of your appetites and passions; as a neighbor, influence and engage all around you to be your friends, by a temper and carriage made up of prudence and goodness; and let the poor have a certain share in all your yearly profits. As a trader, keep that golden sentence of our Saviour's ever before you, "Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do you also unto them."

RULE V.

While you make the *precepts* of Scripture the constant rule of your duty, you may with courage rest upon the *promises* of Scripture as the springs of your encouragement. All divine assistances and divine recompenses are contained in them. The spirit of light and grace is promised

to assist them that ask it. Heaven and glory are promised to reward the faithful and the obedient.

RULE VI.

In every affair of life, begin with God. Consult him in every thing that concerns you. View him as the author of all your blessings and all your hopes, as your best friend and your eternal portion. Meditate on him in this view, with a continual renewal of your trust in him, and a daily surrender of yourself to him, till you feel that you love him most entirely, that you serve him with sincere delight, and that you cannot live a day without God in the world.

RULE VII.

You know yourself to be a man, an indigent creature, and a sinner, and you profess to be a Christian, a disciple of the blessed Jesus; but never think you know Christ nor yourself, as you ought, till you find a daily need of him, for righteousness and strength, for pardon and sanctification; and let him be your constant introducer to the great God, though he sit upon a throne of grace. Remember his own words, John xiv. 6, "No man cometh to the Father but by me."

RULE VIII.

Make prayer a pleasure and not a task, and then you will not forget nor omit it. If ever you have lived in a praying family, never let it be your fault if you do not live in one always. Believe that day, that hour, or those minutes to be all wasted and lost, which any worldly pretences would tempt you to save out of the public worship of the church, the certain and constant duties of the closet, or any necessary services for God and godliness. Beware lest a blast attend it, and not a blessing. If God had not reserved one day in seven to himself, I fear religion would have been lost out of the world; and every day of the week exposed to a curse which has no morning religion.

RULE IX.

See that you watch and labor, as well as pray. Diligence and dependence must be united in the practice of every Christian. It is the same wise man acquaints us that "the hand of the diligent and the blessing of the Lord joined together make us rich," Prov. x. 4—22, rich in the treasures of body or mind, of time or eternity.

It is your duty, indeed, under a sense of your own weakness, to pray daily against sin; but

if you would effectually avoid it, you must also avoid temptation, and every dangerous opportunity. Set a double guard, wheresoever you feel or suspect an enemy at hand—The world without and the heart within, have so much flattery and deceit in them, that we must keep a sharp eye upon both, lest we are trapt into mischief between them.

RULE X.

Honor, profit, and pleasure, have been sometimes called the world's trinity; they are its three chief idols; each of them is sufficient to draw a soul off from God, and ruin it forever. Beware of them, therefore, and of all their subtle insinuations, if you would be innocent and happy.

Remember that the honor which comes from God, the approbation of Heaven, and of your own conscience, are infinitely more valuable than all the esteem or applause of men. Dare not venture one step out of the road of Heaven, for fear of being laughed at for walking strictly in it. It is a poor religion that cannot stand against a jest.

Sell not your hopes of heavenly treasures, nor any thing that belongs to your eternal interest, for any of the advantages of the present life;

"What shall it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Remember also the words of the wise man, "He that loveth pleasure, shall be a poor man;" he that indulges himself in wine and oil, that is, in drinking, in feasting, and in sensual gratifications, shall not be rich. It is one of St. Paul's characters of a most degenerate age, when "men become lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God." And that "fleshly lusts war against the soul," is St. Peter's caveat to the Christians of his time.

RULE XI.

Preserve your conscience always soft and sensible. If but one sin force its way into that tender part of the soul, and dwell easy there, the road is paved for a thousand iniquities.

And take heed, that under any scruple, doubt, or temptation whatsoever, you never let any reasonings satisfy your conscience, which will not be a sufficient apology to the great Judge at the last day.

RULE XII.

Keep this thought ever in your mind—It is a world of vanity and vexation in which you live;

the flatteries and promises of it are vain and deceitful; prepare therefore to meet disappointments. Many of its occurrences are teasing and vexatious. In every ruffling storm without, possess your spirit in patience, and let all be calm and serene within. Clouds and tempests are only found in the lower skies; the Heavens above are ever bright and clear. Let your heart and hope dwell much in these serene regions; live as a stranger here on earth, but as a citizen of Heaven, if you will maintain a soul at ease.

RULE XIII.

Since in many things we offend all, and there is not a day passes which is perfectly free from sin, let "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," be your daily work. A frequent renewal of these exercises, which make a Christian at first, will be a constant evidence of your sincere Christianity, and give you peace in life, and hope in death.

RULE XIV.

Ever carry about with you such a sense of the uncertainty of every thing in this life, and of life itself, as to put nothing off till to-morrow, which you can conveniently do to-day. Dilatory

persons are frequently exposed to surprise and hurry in every thing that belongs to them; the time is come, and they are unprepared. Let the concerns of your soul and your shop, your trade and your religion, lie always in such order as far as possible, that death at a short warning may be no occasion for a disquieting tumult in your spirit, and that you may escape the anguish of a bitter repentance in a dying hour.

Phronimus, a considerable east-land merchant, happened to meet with a copy of these Rules about the time he permitted his son to commence partnership with him in his trade; he transcribed them with his own hand, and made a present of them to the youth, together with the articles of partnership. Here, young man, said he, is a paper of more worth than these articles. Read it over once a month, till it is wrought in your soul and temper. Walk by these rules, and I can trust my estate in your hands Copy out these counsels in your life, and you will make me and yourself easy and happy.

CONTENTS.

LETTER I.

LETTER II.

LETTER III.

LETTER IV.

LETTER V.

LETTER VI.

LETTER VII.

LETTER VIII.

LETTER IX.

LETTER X.

LETTER XI.

LETTER XII.

LETTER XIII.

LETTER XIV.

LETTER XV.

LETTER XVI.

Long Metre.

The Word of God is Truth.

BEfore the solemn Word
That sounds triumphant grace,
The counsels of a God
And brings eternal peace.

[illegible] Grace
[illegible]
[illegible] Earth [illegible]

HYMN 305. Common Metre.

A Call to Youth.

KIND are the Calls of yonder Lamb,
Divinely big with grace,
He finds the tender age and
And seeks his lovely face.

[illegible] and to the youthful [illegible]
Spring at the blissful sound,
Then with redeeming love he shines
And makes their joys abound.